

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES 史料紹介

A Transgressive Life: The Diary of a Genroku Samurai

an essay adapted from a paper for the 1994 Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting

Luke Roberts
University of California, Santa Barbara

Readings of laws, such as the bakufu law collection, *Ofuregaki shūsei* 『御触書集成』, or of moral treatises, such as *Onna daigaku* 『女大学』 (A Greater Learning for Women, written by Kaibara Ekken) have provided us with influential images of Edo period society. However, even the creators of these documents knew that people did not always follow the rules. Indeed, many historians have pointed out that if a law was issued and reissued many times, it is probably a sign that the law was not being obeyed. We can learn the intentions of the creators of these documents when we read them, but what can we know about society by looking at prescriptions? Diaries can provide some perspective on the issue because they are records of how people actually lived and behaved. The activities of people can be compared with laws and moral prescriptions current in the society of the diarist. What I wish to look at in this essay is the disjuncture between actual behavior and prescribed behavior, as it is revealed in the personal diary of a samurai who lived at the beginning of the eighteenth century. I will look at instances where the author knowingly broke laws and moral prescriptions (this I will call "transgressions"), and explore the limits of his "misbehavior". By doing this I hope to reach some preliminary conclusions about how prescriptions and values actually operated in his society. I say preliminary, because a full consideration of this issue would have to include exploration of the many prescriptions which the author obeyed without reflection.

This diary was authored by a middle-ranking samurai of Owari domain--his family had a fief worth 100 *koku*--who lived in the castle town of Nagoya. The author's name was Asahi Monzaemon 朝日文左衛門, and he kept this diary for 34 years, from the year 1684 until the year 1717.¹ In terms of his own life this meant from when he was a seventeen-year-old boy until the year before his death at age 45--by which time he had become a grandparent. The wonderful detailed entries include description of the daily life of Monzaemon and his friends, the gossip of all Japan as it raced down highways into Monzaemon's own world of Nagoya (I am amazed to find frequently in his diary stories about common peasants from as far away as Musashi province.), and copies of proclamations sent out by his own domain government.

It is clear from the contents that this was a personal diary, and that Monzaemon did not intend it to be read easily by others. His writing not only contains many casually abbreviated phrases, which are sometimes difficult to interpret, but also at times (concerning his gambling and visits to brothels) he deliberately encoded his language in obscure, incorrectly used or invented *kanji*, and in a dense pseudo-*kanbun* style. Even in his more lucid prose he often criticized the rulers. In like manner, he sometimes

1. In *Nagoya sōsho zokuhen* 名古屋叢書続編, Vols. 9-12, *Ōmurōchūki* 鸚鵡籠中記(1-4), with an index in the *Sakuin* volume (unnumbered) and useful descriptive comments in the *Sōmokuroku* volume (unnumbered) (Nagoya-shi kyōikuinkai, Nagoya 1967-70). A slightly modernized set of selections from the diary is published with useful annotation in *Genroku kakyū bushi no seikatsu* 元禄下級武士の生活, Kaga Kishirō 加賀樹芝朗 comp. and ed. (Yūzankaku, Tokyo, 1968). These selections represent less than a thirtieth of the original. The only extensive treatment of the diary is the entertaining *Genroku otatami bugyō no nikki* 元禄御畳奉行の日記 (Chūōkōronsha, Chūkōshinsho no. 740, 1985) by Kōsaka Jirō 神坂次郎.

EDITORS NOTE: Since this presentation was given some 700 pages of the *Ōmurōchūki* were published. See 朝日重章著、塚本学編注、『(摘録) 鸚鵡籠中記一元禄武士の日記一』上・下、岩波文庫、青463-1, 463-2.

described the transgressions of himself, his friends, and others whom he knew only through gossip. What makes this diary especially useful for the purpose of this essay is that Monzaemon recorded many opinions and prescriptions which highlight for us his own awareness of the dialogue between his own moral universe and that of the domain law-makers and of his parents.

Although Monzaemon did not always obey the law, he was by no means a rascal. Indeed, he was a timid person; heavily dependent upon the affirmation of family and friends. Most of his “transgressions” he carried out in companionship with other people. It is because of this that I find his values representative of the Nagoya samurai of his day. Monzaemon entitled his diary *Ōmurōchūki* 『鸚鵡籠中記』 which means “Record From a Parrot’s Cage”. Presumably, he saw himself as a parrot, a passive recorder of true events. Furthermore, the parrot in this title is caged. The cage he lived in was the secure and comfortable setting of home and of the values of society around him.

Let me begin with gambling. The police strictly punished gambling, albeit sporadically.² Monzaemon’s diary is filled with stories of people being banished or even publicly executed for gambling. He also dutifully recorded domain directives against gambling in his diary. However, from time to time he laid down his brush and went to friends’ houses to put money on the line. He wrote in the first month of 1693, “I went to Aiwara Fujizō’s place. Miyake Kurōsaburō and I teamed up as “house” in a game of card gambling and we each lost 200 *mon* 文 [of copper coins].” Monzaemon’s mother, however, raked it in; five days later he went with his parents to Maruyama Kazaemon’s place for an evening meal, and he notes, “There was *hōbiki* 宝引 gambling. Mother won 3 *kan* 貫 [of copper coins].”³

Monzaemon received a shock during the ninth month of 1693: the retainer, Gotō Kiemon, who used his house as a gambling center was arrested. A week later Monzaemon records, “Gotō Kiemon was crucified. However he was not paraded through the streets of the town. He was led walking on his own. They say that when he was crucified he was laughing wildly.” Monzaemon had actually observed similar punishments before, but this time he was especially shocked because he already well knew that punishment would come his way. His own cousin, Jūemon, was implicated and banished from the domain. Because of the system of family responsibility Monzaemon and all of the relatives were forced to stay indoors for a period as a sign of penance.⁴ The event frightened him enough that for two years following one cannot find references to his gambling.⁵ In early 1696 however he started gambling heavily (ten times over the next three months) twice at his place but usually at the house of a friend named Sezaemon, in the company of five or six close friends. Perhaps he feared punishment from his parents, or the domain; these entries in his diary are encoded and are difficult to decipher.⁶ It is clear however that the sums were quite large: Monzaemon counted his wins and losses in gold coins. Around this same

2. Vol 9. p. 122, 1692. 11. 27. p. 125, 1692.12.10.

3. Vol. 9, p. 133-34, p. 136, for example, 1693.1.4,5,9, 14. The phrase “teamed up as house in a game of card gambling” is a tentative translation for 予と三宅九郎三郎と乗合迦字の頭をし、*norai* means going together, splitting costs, and *kau* means *kabu* which is the nine card of *mekuri karuta*, and is the name of a game where the object is to get a hand closest to 9, 19, 29 etc. See p.368, 1696.6.30 for a domain directive.

4. Vol. 9, pp. 186-190, 1693.9.n.d.

5. Vol 9. p. 304, 1695.3.23, reference to his gambling at *sugoroku*, at which time a friend insulted him, “I got very angry, stood up and threw my coins into the garden and went home.” And soon after (p. 318, 1695.7.4) he gambles with friends at a game of *go*. There might be one earlier reference to gambling: Vol. 9. pp. 252, 1694.8.28. (予、加藤平左と大曾根へ天目伏に行。) may be a reference to gambling. *Temmoku* is tea bowl, and *fuse* is slang for gambling, but I am still unsure of the meaning.

6. Vol. 9. p. 344, 345, 346,347,352,353,354,355, 356 1696. 1-4.n.d. An example of such a “coded” entry is 方牘予倅一黄 (played cards and happily I won one gold [oban?]) or 予動金輪為之宗二黄七佰. (I “moved some money”[gambled] and gained 2 golds and 700 [mon]) 黒表予二黄二佰投塵 (Black face ?[a card game? used paper money?] I threw away [lost] two golds and two hundred [mon]).

time he sold one of his swords, and then a suit of armor, to get money; an event many contemporaries would have seen as symbolic of the decline of the samurai ethic.⁷

What does this say about the relations between domain prescription and actual behavior? Domain policing was not thorough. Perhaps this is why the occasional punishments were so public and so violent, in order to discourage people from crime. As we can see, punishments had the intended effect if they hit close to home, but even then only for a while. More important to Monzaemon's code of behavior in the long run was the support of his friends.

The domain frequently prohibited samurai from attending popular theater. Monzaemon once received a direct order from his captain that neither he nor members of his family should attend the theater.⁸ Attendance was considered unbecoming to a samurai's dignity, and a threat to his values. Yet no one seems actually to have been sentenced for mere attendance. I can only find records of samurai being punished when they got into fights at a theater, or actually performed themselves. For example, near the beginning of Monzaemon's diary he reports the story of two young retainers who were disenfeoffed in 1686 because they went around the countryside performing marionette puppetry.⁹ Almost from the first time Monzaemon saw a puppet show he wrote, "Words cannot express the fascination and beauty!" Monzaemon knew it was wrong but often went out with friends under various acceptable pretexts, in order to watch theater.¹⁰ When the famed reciter of Osaka, Takemoto Gidayū, performed in a village near Nagoya in 1695, a youthful Monzaemon and a friend grabbed fishing poles and told their parents they were going to the river. Once out of sight they stashed their gear and ran to Sugi village where the show was being held. When he returned, he informs us, "Both of my parents asked accusingly, 'Did you go to Sugi village?' Although I apologized, it is a great sin to deceive one's parents, and I felt so alone and ashamed."¹¹ Monzaemon's parents tried to discourage him from viewing theater, but Monzaemon soon forgot his remorse, and his passion only increased. He remained a hopeless addict to the end of his days. Once he was so engaged in watching a comedy performance on a street corner that when it had finished he noticed his short sword had been stolen right out of its sheath!¹²

I would like to shift the perspective from his vices, to his criticisms of one of the rulers. This is the shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi 徳川綱吉 (r. 1680-1709), who reigned over the period of the first half of this diary. Tsunayoshi has come down to us as the Dog Shogun 犬公方, because of his extreme interest in protecting the lives of dogs. His laws of mercy and compassion (生類憐之令) forbade many kinds of violence against animals--all save humans, that is, who were punished very severely for transgressing these laws of mercy. Monzaemon's diary is replete with references to the anomalies of the reign of the Dog Shogun. In the 10th month of 1693 a wild boar ran into Takadanobaba village near the outskirts of Edo,

killing two passersby. It fought a third who killed the boar but died soon afterward. The shogun heard of this and sent an inspector. With no concern at all for the people, a burial for the boar was ordered. Later, upon hearing that the burial given was lacking in quality, the order was given for a more lavish funeral, but when the boar's body was exhumed it was found to be missing its hind legs. A strict investigation followed, and it was discovered that

7. Vol. 9. p. 351. 1696.2.18, p. 352 1696.3.13, p. 362 1696.5.12.

8. Vol 9. p. 287, 1695.1.20. His unit captain warns him and his family against going to theater.

9. Vol 9. p. 18, 1686. 8.16.

10. Vol 9. p. 216, 1694.2.misoka, p. 293, 1695.2.13

11. Vol. 9, p. 314, 1695.5.28.

12. Vol. 9, p. 142, 1693.2.21.

apparently a beggar had secretly stolen the hind legs and sold them as a remedy for intestinal problems. The shogun was greatly angered and had the beggar taken and punished.¹³

Although bizarrely humorous in retrospect, it must have been a terrible day for those involved. Monzaemon records that in the second month of 1695 there was a great fire in Edo. Forty women and 350 men perished in the flames of the Edo compound of the lord of Kii domain. The shogun however sent a request to find out if any dogs had died, and it was discovered that three had perished. The shogun then sent palanquins to receive their bodies, but two of the bodies had been lost. The Kii officials told the shogunal officials they would have them the next day. So that night they went out and found two dog bodies and had them ready for the palanquins the next day. That day however shogunal officials complained that these bodies did not fit the descriptions found in the report made two days earlier. What happened next is not recorded.¹⁴ Monzaemon seems to have recorded this entry for its shock value, but here he did not give any explicit commentary. Soon after, however he records that in the same year someone crucified two dogs in the public execution grounds of Edo with a placard stating, "These dogs have borrowed the authority of the shogun to persecute the people." Five months later the man, a samurai, was caught, and was ordered to commit seppuku. Monzaemon himself wrote, "If these laws were quickly repealed, the poor would be well again."¹⁵ Like most people in Japan, Monzaemon could not take the law to heart, and it was fortunate that the domain was lax in enforcement. He went fishing almost weekly with friends, which he cynically describes as going to "destroy life" 殺生, using the Buddhist terminology of the shogunal law, but he did not refrain from giving offerings at temples and shrines as he did once when he practiced with his sword on the body of an executed criminal.¹⁶ Indeed, he relished a pot of boiled goose in the kitchen with five friends, and wondered in his diary what the domain police would do if they heard of it.¹⁷ It seems that he felt no guilt in breaking shogunal law, but merely was afraid of punishment. When the shogun died, the order went around for no parties or singing, as a means of showing respect, but Monzaemon immediately invited friends over, and served sake and whale meat. There was also an order for no construction, but he began repairs on his storehouse and garden walls at this time.¹⁸ These minor acts of protest reveal that Monzaemon had little internalized respect for the shogun.

The shogun was not the only object of Monzaemon's critical judgement. He also confided to his diary criticisms of domainal rulers as well. In an entry made in 1693 he described his own lord, Tokugawa Tsunanari 徳川綱誠, in the following way, "Our lord was born with a desire to increase his own wealth. Ever since he was five he has been greedy. Now that he is older he is only more skillful at it. I think that although the lord is the governor of the realm, he brings poverty upon his people."¹⁹ Monzaemon also described the lord's mother as "sexually depraved" (貧姪絶倫) for inviting Edo townsmen to her residence and having sexual

13. Vol. 9, p. 190, 1693.10.n.d.

14. Vol.9, p. 290, 1695.2.8.

15. Vol. 9, p. 292, 1695.2.10 and Vol. 9, p. 194, 1693.10.21. also see Vol. 9, p. 334 1695.10.n.d.

16. Kōsaka, pp. 9-10, Kaga, pp. 60-61, Vol. 9, pp. 126-127, 1692.12.14 and Vol. 9, p. 136, 1693. 16.

17. Vol. 9, p. 212, 1694.2.3, and Kōsaka, pp. 49-56.

18. Vol. 11, pp. 420-421, 1709.1.13-15. and pp. 430-2 for warehouse repairs.

19. Vol. 9, p. 193, 1693.10.21 *gorohi*

relations with those whom she liked.²⁰ Monzaemon also recorded verse poking fun at elites, or mildly critical of domain actions.²¹ However, Monzaemon was not brave enough to criticize the laws and characters of the rulers beyond the privacy of his diary.

Drinking saké was a common samurai pastime which was often carried to excess. Time and again young Monzaemon saw friends, relatives and strangers become sick or lose their senses because of sake, and he frequently closed such an entry in his diary with the caution, "I must take this to heart."²² In the fourth month of 1693, during a dinner at a friend's house, two friends got very drunk and went to lay down together in the next room. One of them asked the other to quit his master and become his own retainer, to which the other became very angry and yelled, "Everyone knows that I have sworn fealty to Shinpachi!" He then charged out of the room to get his sword, at which time the guests calmed him down and hustled the other man out of the house. The angry one, named Kūrōzaburō, sat down in a funk and started crying ("as usual!" Monzaemon notes.). Then suddenly he jumped up and ran around the house, vomiting on the floor. Monzaemon and friends finally got Kūrōzaburō to sleep in the entranceway of the house. But soon he threw up again and crawled right through it. Then he took off all of his soiled and stinking clothes and ran around the house stark naked, until he tried to run into a closet and banged his head on a pillar, falling backwards onto the floor. After that he started "howling like a cat, bellowing like a cow." Monzaemon ended this entry by quoting both Confucius and Mencius on the danger of drinking too much.²³ Monzaemon also recorded in his diary stories of samurai and even daimyo who were disenfeoffed because of incidents arising from excessive alcohol consumption.²⁴ The domain frequently issued proclamations against excessive drinking,²⁵ but the fourth lord of Nagoya himself was an extraordinary drinker who challenged his retainers to drinking bouts. He was fond of one drinking contest in which he lined up 53 small sake cups in a row. Each cup had a painting of one of the 53 post stations between Kyoto and Edo on the Tōkaidō highway. The lord drank his way from Edo to Kyoto and then had a challenger drink the whole way back. Hardier challengers could make the trip by "Express Post", *hayabikyaku*, a lacquered cup holding two liters, with pictures of all fifty-three stations inside.²⁶ Samurai had much time on their hands and a steady income. Despite domain proclamations they had a role model for excessive drinking in their lord. Therefore it is little wonder that many retainers spent many of their evenings drinking.

Monzaemon's parents worried, and frequently confronted him about excessive drinking, but Monzaemon did not quit. Indeed, as he became older he drank more and more, largely because this was a standard element of social interaction between samurai men. Guilt over his excessive drinking gnawed at Monzaemon, and entries like the following are common, "I got terribly drunk. On the road home I vomited greatly. . . I should take this to heart. Ah! From now on, if I disobey the orders of my mother and father, I hope a hundred years of my life be shortened to one hour. How it hurts! How stupid I am!"²⁷ In 1715, Monzaemon's mother died, and her deathbed wish was that he quit sake. He writes, "Throughout my whole life I have been unfilial and have done nothing but go against her heart. Now I feel as if I will split. I fear the stupidity and sin of a character which merely feels remorse and sadness. Ashamedly, there is nothing that I can do now. Ah, Ah!" Thereafter, he occasionally saw his mother in dreams, and on one of these

20. Vol. 10, p. 356, 1702.10.n.d.

21. For example Vol. 10, p. 116, 1698.11.27-30 for description of an *ema* critical of sumptuary laws. Vol. 11, pp. 432 1709.2.9 for a verse poking fun at the body of an elite. Vol. 11 p. 441 1709.3.4 for what seems to be his own verse critical the domain's punishment of a number of retainers.

22. Vol. 10, p. 72, 1698.1.27 and Vol. 12, p. 651, 1717.2.17--Vol. 12 p. 20 1711-4.4 he cannot eat because of a hangover and says "How stupid am I, and how lacking in filial piety! I should take this to heart while I still escape punishment." 不齋可慎向來

23. Vol. 9, p. 148-9, 1693.4.13.

24. Vol. 4, p. 351.

25. Vol. 9, p. 381, 1696.9.6. On the same day as he records this law in his diary he goes drinking!

26. Kōsaka, p. 32. Vol. 11, p. 356, 1708.6.n.d.

occasions he woke up crying, promising to quit drinking.²⁸ Unsuccessfully, I might add. He continued to drink, his eyes became yellow, and he died of liver disease in the following year.

I have given above a number of examples of Monzaemon's transgressions against his parents' wishes and domainal and shogunal laws. They suggest that the beliefs and behavior of Monzaemon's circle of friends were very important in determining his behavior and moral attitudes. Not surprising, perhaps, but this serves as a reminder that we must look at the actual communities in which people live in order to understand their values.

Furthermore, there was great variation in the implementation of laws, and it was the implementation of the law rather than the letter of the law to which Monzaemon responded. Some laws, such as those against excessive drinking, were not enforced. I can find no example of a samurai being punished for excessive drinking per se. Laws against gambling were enforced sporadically with great severity, and occasionally frightened Monzaemon into good behavior, but in the long run the power of friends' behavior was far more important to Monzaemon. As for political independence, Monzaemon allowed himself privately to criticize the persons and behavior of his lords in his diary, but he never questioned the system. He was of course a major beneficiary--a domesticated samurai, trapped in a cage of small luxuries and good friends.

27. Vol. 11, p. 446, 1709.3.23-24. 甚可謹。向來、嗚乎、父母の命に背き百年の命を一時に縮めんと欲す。痛哉、愚哉。

28. Vol. 11, p. 446 1709.3.24. Vol. 12, pp. 548 and 550, 1716.1.13 and 22. And for a case where he remembers his mother's wish, Vol. 12, p. 651, 1717.2.17. "Yashiro came many times and said my eyes were yellow. I have disobeyed the warnings of my departed mother, and beating my chest I only wail up at the blue sky. Ah, Ah! Anyhow I must try to quit sake."